



yap rap

A Report on Alberta Children's Services Youth Advisory Panel

This newsletter was created to be a source of ongoing communication and information for government ministries, youth-related agencies, organizations in Alberta, and members of the public who are interested in learning more about the Youth Advisory Panel's current projects, discussion topics, activities and upcoming events.

who we are

The Youth Advisory Panel (YAP), formed in June 2000, is a group of 12 youth selected from across Alberta, that meets six times annually to provide feedback on proposed recommendations and findings, comment on current initiatives and propose improvements or new ideas to enhance the quality of services to youth. Its key role is to ensure a solid, youth perspective on all work done by the Youth Secretariat.

The Youth Secretariat, housed in the Ministry of Children's Services and Chaired by Mary Anne Jablonski, MLA, Red Deer North, was developed out of the heightened recognition that adolescents today are faced with significant life challenges at an earlier age than previous generations.

Youth or adolescents with a history of family breakdowns, child welfare involvement, addictions, legal or mental health concerns for example, face even greater difficulties. In addition, aboriginal youth must cope with the demanding task of finding their way in systems that often do not meet their cultural and spiritual needs. There is a growing need to address the variety of challenges faced by youth in Alberta as they meet the developmental stages of adolescence and progress into young adulthood.

Through diversity in ethnicity, culture, geography, age, gender, and socioeconomic status, YAP endeavors to provide support to the Youth Secretariat with an ongoing "voice" for Alberta youth, and to ensure they are heard in a meaningful and relevant way on issues that impact the lives of youth.



meet the chair

Welcome to the first edition of the YAP Newsletter. As you read this newsletter you will discover some of the issues and actions tackled by our provincial Youth Advisory Panel. I am very proud of all our YAP members. Their commitment and dedication to their work as members of YAP help us to understand youth better.

As Chair of the Youth Secretariat, I am involved in the concerns of youth at risk, youth in transition and youth in general. Through my work on the Standing Policy Committee on Health and Community Living, and in Caucus, I am able to advocate and promote the concerns of youth to other government members.

Thanks to the strong support and direction of Premier and Mrs. Klein and the Honourable Iris Evans, Minister of Children's Services, the Youth Secretariat has been able to effectively deal with some of the major concerns of youth at risk and youth in transition. Although we are a long way from solving the problems of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), drugs and alcohol abuse or teenage pregnancy, we have taken steps in the right direction.

Within the Youth Secretariat, on the Youth Advisory Panel and in the Department of Children's Services are very caring, concerned and committed individuals. It is good for you to know that we are all working together to hear what our youth have to say and to move into the future with the ideas of youth in mind.

Mary Anne Jablonski
MLA, Red Deer North



message from the minister

Welcome to the first issue of the Youth Advisory Panel Newsletter - a great new resource designed to tell you about the panel's current activities and what members are up to in their own communities.

I am so impressed with the work of the Youth Advisory Panel in identifying issues affecting Alberta's young people and bringing them forward to government. The panel's work has been successful under the leadership of Mary Anne Jablonski, Youth Secretariat Chair and MLA for Red Deer North. Her dedication to Alberta's young people is unfailing and I thank her for her vision.

Listening to the views of our youth is so very important. We cannot move forward to improve services for Alberta's young people without working closely together and hearing their ideas. Keep up the good work!

Iris Evans, Minister
Alberta Children's Services

on the lookout - YAP Recruitment Information

The Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) is now recruiting youth to add to their team roster.

We accept applications on an ongoing basis, from individuals aged 16 to 20 years, wishing to join the panel. Of particular interest, are youth who are able to offer:

- Experience with the child welfare system
- Experience with the youth justice system
- Experience with addictions
- Experience with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)
- An aboriginal community perspective
- A rural community perspective

If you or someone you know may be interested in joining YAP, visit www.child.gov.ab.ca, email yapinfo@gov.ab.ca or call Alberta Children's Services, Youth Strategies at (780) 415-0085. For long distance calls, first dial 310-0000.

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introducing YAP 2003...



Jessica Tanghe

An 18-year-old single mother from Slave Lake, Jessica has been a YAP member for a year and a half, and has already been actively involved with the 2003 Great Kids Awards and 2003 Youth Forums.



Trevor Brown

At 19, Trevor is a pre-dentistry student at the University of Lethbridge, bringing a southern Alberta perspective to the Panel. A recipient of a Great Kids Award, Trevor has been a valuable addition to YAP since 2002.



Daniel Lee

Studying electrical engineering at the University of Calgary, Daniel will graduate with a bachelor of science in April 2004. He is a Great Kids Award Winner and, at 21, has been involved with YAP since its inception. Through personal experience, he contributes to the panel by bringing his unique perspective on youth with disabilities.



Matthew Wildcat

A 19-year-old member of Ermineskin Cree Nation, Matthew is enrolled in native studies at the University of Alberta. He brings an aboriginal perspective to the panel, and also lends his time and expertise to other groups including the Youth Advisory Committee for Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and as native studies representative on the University of Alberta Student's Council.



Victoria Molnar

The Executive Director of the Association for Youth in Care in Edmonton, Victoria is a 20-year-old who was raised in government care. She has a passion for the work she does and is doing all she can to radically improve the experiences of youth in care.



Myron Wolf Child

Myron studies political science and social studies education at the University of Lethbridge, with aspirations of becoming a lawyer. He is passionate about many issues including children, mental health, racism and child poverty. Myron overcomes challenges by persevering and focusing his positive energy on improving the lives of others.



Julie Spatz

Julie is a 20-year-old mother from Innisfail. She enjoys spending time with her grandparents and volunteering with youth. She believes in the voice of young people and sees them as a valuable asset to society. Lending her energy and insight, Julie has been an instrumental member for three-and-one-half years.



Chris Kooistra

Believing that "laughter solves many of life's problems", Chris is an energetic individual who enjoys volunteering and working at a street shelter for youth. At 20, he is grateful for the opportunity to be involved with YAP, and to provide feedback on important legislation and policy affecting youth.



Kimberly Wagner

As a student at Grant MacEwen College, Kimberley has been a member on the panel for just over one year. She hopes to make it possible for Alberta's youth to have a stronger, more recognizable voice in our government.



Dana Lea

An 18-year-old University student studying criminology at the University of Alberta, Dana has an avid interest in politics, public speaking and volunteering. She hopes to complete her master's of law, and one day, run for office.



Jeeshan Chowdhury

Jeeshan is a 20-year-old University of Alberta student in his second year of Medical School. A past Great Kids Award recipient, Jeeshan has served on the panel for the past three-and-one-half years.



Jade Humphrey

Jade is 18 years old, lives in Grande Prairie, and has been on the panel for two-and-one-half years. As he is completing high school and working part-time, he tries to fit in golf, skiing and working out in his spare time.

YAP gearing up for youth forums 2004

Planning is well underway for the 2004 Youth Forums and many of the YAP members will be busy with the development and implementation of the forums in their own communities.

By bringing together diverse and representative groups of committed young people in communities across the province, the Alberta Youth Forums are designed to strengthen the voice of young people; educate, empower and encourage youth to share insights and ideas; allow youth to participate in ongoing discussion with government, stakeholders and community leaders; and provide youth with the means to contribute to the continual enrichment of Alberta.

Held from January to May 2004, approximately 20 forums will set the stage for young people to take a proactive approach to gaining a greater knowledge and understanding of the opportunities and services currently available for youth in their community, and researching and identifying areas of improvement. The Youth Forums will seek to recognize and celebrate successes and accomplishments, forge partnerships and dedicated networks between youth and community leaders, create innovative opportunities, and further build upon existing initiatives for young people.

For more information, please contact Alberta Children's Services Youth Strategies at (780) 415-0085. /



Youth Forums 2004
Youth committed to community.

Mary Anne Jablonski, M.L.A. Red Deer North, is committed to her role as Chair of the Youth Secretariat. She attends each YAP Meeting, held six times annually, so she can spend time with the panel, review key issues and priorities being discussed within the government, and hear what the youth have to say on the current "hot topics" in the political arena.

Her updates allow the panel to understand "a day in the life of an M.L.A." and to gain a greater perspective on the important issues of the day.

"The youth enjoy the chance to offer their feedback on the topics that Mary Anne brings to the table," says Dione Nobrega, member of the YAP Support Team. "This portion of our meetings is always extremely helpful in ensuring that the panel's discussions throughout the weekend are effective, relevant, and within the context of the government's current environment."

Some of the topics Mary Anne reviewed with the Panel at the most recent meeting, held in Red Deer, from September 12 to 14, 2003, included:

- healthcare;
- education;
- utilities;
- insurance premiums;
- mad cow disease; and

Issues at the top of the list of items to be discussed at the next YAP meeting are:

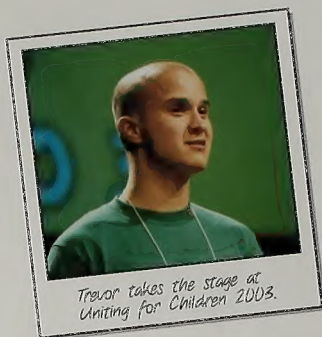
- domestic violence; and
- crystal methamphetamine and its growing presence among Alberta's youth. //

the panel's portfolio

Since its inception, YAP has played an important role in a number of important issues and policy changes for the government of Alberta. They have also invested time and effort into the planning and implementation of some very important events, related to children and youth, for the province.

Here is a brief overview of the panel's discussion items over the past few years:

- Review of Alberta Mental Health Board's report on: Enhancing Mental Health Services for Children and Youth
- Participation in Youth Forums
- Discussion on how adolescents are dealt with in the child welfare system for the Youth Secretariat Report
- Review of the Youth in Transition Policy Framework
- Participation in Uniting for Children 2001 Forum
- Discussion on YAP recruitment procedures
- Discussion on alcohol/drug use amongst youth
- New member orientation
- Preparation of submission for the Future Summit
- Discussion of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and teen pregnancy
- Preparation for the review of the Child Welfare Act
- Attended Future Summit
- Review of and recommendations on the Career and Life Management (CALM) Curriculum
- Assistance at the Great Kids Awards
- Discussion on transition for youth with developmental disabilities
- Assistance with Uniting for Children 2003 Forum //



Trevor takes the stage at Uniting for Children 2003.



Julie and youth volunteer help at Uniting for Children 2003.



Kimberly helps out at the Great Kids Award 2003 fun night.



Victoria and Mrs. Klein at the Forum after a presentation from the Youth.



Minister Evans hugs Daniel after he speaks at the Alberta's Promise Launch.



The group celebrates Dione's birthday at the September 2003 meeting.

upcoming events

- November 2003: YAP Meeting (Edmonton, Alberta)
- December 2003: Training session for Mentors and Youth Leaders of Youth Forums 2004 (Banff, Alberta)
- January 2004: YAP Meeting (Edmonton, Alberta)



YAP reviews materials at their September 2003 meeting.



from my view

by
Jessica Tanghe

This article will have a revolving author, featuring a different member of the Youth Advisory Panel in each issue. Panel members will use this opportunity to share about their lives and the unique challenges and opportunities they may be facing, to share how they are contributing to their home communities and regions, or to offer a youth perspective on a current issue of the day.

My name is Jessica Tanghe. I am 18 years old, and, although I was born in Edmonton, Alberta, I have lived in Slave Lake for most of my life.

At the age of 15, I became pregnant, and in March of 2001, I was blessed with a wonderful baby daughter. I feel like my life truly began after her birth, as I was suddenly given someone to live for and love unconditionally, and a living, breathing reason to hope and dream and get out of bed each morning. I will admit, being a single mom is hard - there are many things that I have to sacrifice in my youth in order to raise a child. Despite these challenges, I have come to realize that they were my choices that ultimately brought her into my life, and now they will be my choices that determine how to raise her responsibly and without regret.

I wanted to use this article to speak, in particular, to the teen moms in Alberta who are feeling afraid and lonely and, at times, even hopeless. These feelings are natural and they may never completely go away, but by building networks of support and encouragement into our lives, we can better cope with the difficulties and challenges that we will continue to face - but the only way to receive this help is to go out and get it.

My involvement with the Youth Advisory Panel is one of those important "networks" in my life; in a way, it is my "second family". The love and support I receive, particularly from the Support Team, is overwhelming, and I admire their strength, courage, confidence, optimism, and genuine commitment.

This group helps me grow in areas that are challenging for me, including meeting new people, speaking in public, and communicating my thoughts without the fear of being judged. I feel I have improved in these areas and am excited about my personal growth and, most importantly, about the fact that I am able to do my part to help create better lives for Alberta's youth.

I am grateful to YAP and the many people who have crossed my path and provided me with the help and guidance I needed to get me to where I am today. To all of you, I say "thanks".

comment corner

We want to hear from you! If you have something interesting to share about the exciting things happening in your neck of the woods - youth events, activities, or current local news in your community...or if you just want to share a beef with us, send it to yapinfo@gov.ab.ca. We may publish your thoughts in our next issue.

alberta children's services launches ADVANCING futures

A Bursary Program for Youth in Government Care

Contributing to a rich social, economic and cultural fabric, an educated population is one of the keys to a strong and healthy community. The Advancing Futures Bursary Program has recently been established to assist those who have been, or continue to be, under the care of Alberta Children's Services, by allowing them to dream, providing them with opportunities, and equipping them with the resources to succeed.

Individuals are invited to apply if they are interested in upgrading their education; earning a degree/diploma from an Alberta post-secondary institution; learning a trade; and/or earning a license or certificate.

"We are so thrilled to be able to offer this resource to youth who may need a helping hand to achieve their educational aspirations," says Children's Services Minister, Iris Evans. "Advancing Futures is an important step in furthering our ministry's vision of making Alberta a place where children and youth are safe, healthy, and have opportunities to develop to their potential."

For more information or an application package:

- Visit Alberta Children's Services Website www.child.gov.ab.ca;
- Call Alberta Children's Services Youth Strategies at (780) 415-0085 (for long distance, first dial 310-0000);
- Visit Alberta Children's Services Youth Strategies (6th Floor, Sterling Place, 9940 - 106 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2N2); and/or
- Visit any Child and Family Services Authority (CFSA).

service alberta

Virtually Linking Youth and Government

Service Alberta (www.servicealberta.ca) offers a Web site, created by the Alberta Government, to make finding and accessing information on government programs and services quick and easy. It provides direct links to almost everything on the numerous provincial government websites, as well as links to several municipal and federal government sites. Youth Central is the portion of the site that will be geared specifically toward the Alberta youth audience, and will include categories such as employment, events, education, advocacy groups, helpful tips, and more.

As this section of the site is still in its developmental stages, a representative from Service Alberta paid a visit to the September YAP Meeting to present the Youth Central concept, and gather the panel's thoughts on how to best make this site work for youth. YAP's comments included:

- ensuring the site is easy to navigate with youthful, current, and reliable information;
- promoting Youth Central through the following avenues: CALM Curriculum; Youth Employment Centers; posters in schools, malls, community centres, recreation centres, movie theatres and buses; and
- including topics of interest to Alberta Youth, such as bursary and scholarship information, Grade 12 diploma exams, youth-oriented sports pages, youth leadership conferences, volunteer opportunities, Youth in Care, Alberta Children's Advocate, health and mental health, young entrepreneurs, current legislation information, mentoring, and culturally specific information.

Armed with YAP's valuable perspective, the team at Service Alberta returned to the drawing board to complete this exciting and highly anticipated portion of the site. Youth Central will be live in the next few months - visit www.servicealberta.ca to check it out!

For more information contact:

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